

Environmental Assessment of  
Proposed Uranium Mining Lease  
Sale on Allotted Land  
Sale 7

Introduction

The Navajo Area Office (Real Property Management) during the past year has received verbal and written requests from individuals and companies interested in leasing Navajo Indian allotted lands located in McKinley County, New Mexico, for uranium exploration and/or mining purposes.

The general area of interest is in the off-reservation area from north of Prewitt, New Mexico, northerly to Casamero Lake; then westerly to the Smith Lake-Mariano Lake area and westerly along the southern boundary of the Navajo reservation to the Church Rock area.

In December 1971, 566 tracts of allotted land located in the same region described above were advertised for competitive leasing for uranium leasing purposes. 244 tracts received bids. Most of the tracts have since been explored and released. Some tracts are considered to have ore deposits but at great depths making it uneconomical to mine. Some of the tracts are being scheduled for mining in the near future while others are still in the exploration stages and results being evaluated.

The mineral rights in these allotments are owned by the allottees who will receive the bonus bids, annual rentals and production royalties, if any are developed.

The mining leases are on a standard form with a term of 10 years and for so long thereafter as ores are produced in paying quantities. The royalty schedule has recently been revised pursuant to recommendation of the U. S. Geological Survey and approval of the Commissioner, Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The lease forms contain provisions for the lessee to comply with all applicable regulations mainly 25 CFR 172, 25 CFR 177 and 30 CFR 231.

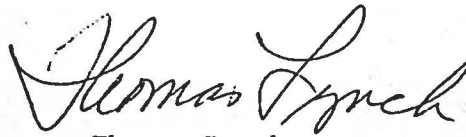
A general review of the advertisement for bids and the past history of leasing these lands for uranium exploration and mining indicate that drilling depths range from 700 feet to 1100 feet with an average of 952 feet, indicate that these lands are used primarily for dwellings and minimal grazing. The grazing is limited due to sparse grasslands with some juniper or pinion in some of the tracts. The terrain varies from semi-desert plains or rolling hills to rocky mesas and high ridges with little or no improved access roads. The elevation average ranges above 6,000 feet to 7,000 feet. Water is obtainable from underground sources. Dwellings will not be disturbed.

The lease provisions provide adequate protection for the benefit of the land-owners and local land-users against damages to the surface, improvements and livestock. The lessee's operations will also be under the supervision of the U. S. Geological Survey.

Economically, the landowners and others living in the area of exploration or mining would benefit from the bonus and rental payments. When mining and production commences, greater monetary benefits can be expected. Some would also benefit through employment.

An environmental review of the lease advertisement shows that the quality of the environment will not be significantly affected to such an extent as to be rendered unsuitable for human and wildlife habitation, or to supplant the economic benefits from employment and income to the land-owners.

Approval of the advertisement and leases to be issued is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of human environment. Thus, an environmental impact statement is not necessary.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Thomas Lynch". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Thomas Lynch